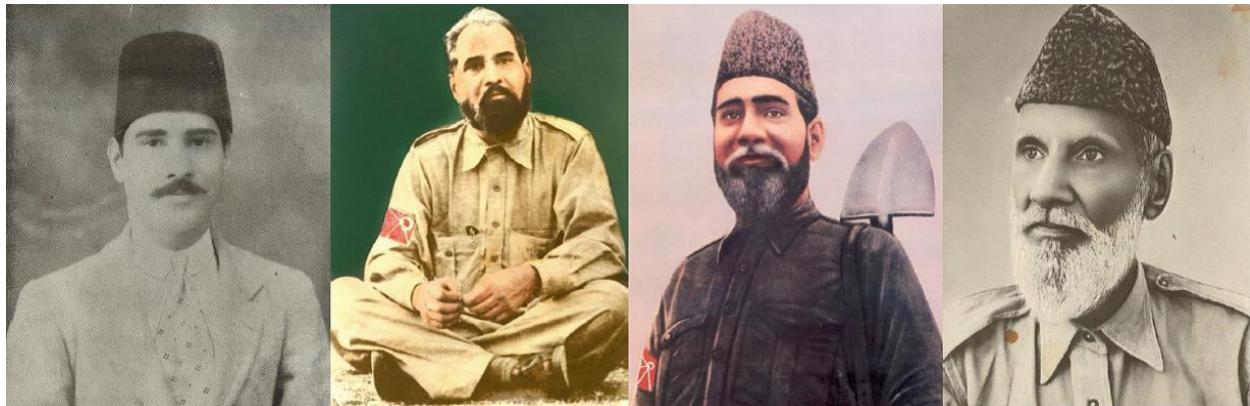


Allama Mashriqi Foretold of the Breakup of Pakistan

By Nasim Yousaf



“Ye Muslims! Today from this platform I sound you a warning. Listen carefully and ponder. In 1970...A panic of widespread bloodshed will sweep the nation. The frenzy of racial and provincial prejudices will grip the whole country...Take it from me that in 1970, Pakistan will be plagued with a grave threat to its sovereignty. You might actually lose it...I warn you about 1970. I warn you to prepare from now to face the situation which will emerge in that year...”

- Allama Mashriqi, 1956

In 1947, the British partitioned India and Pakistan into two wings, East and West Pakistan, which were separated by about 1,400 miles (about 2,200 kilometers). The people of Bengal played a vital role in the creation of Pakistan. However, only about 24 years after Pakistan's creation, the Bengalis in the East Wing fought the War of Independence to obtain a separate homeland for themselves; Bangladesh thus came into being. Allama Mashriqi recognized the poor handling of affairs by the Pakistani Government in East Pakistan from 1947 onwards and foretold of the breakup of Pakistan in 1956.

A collage of news clippings from various websites. It includes screenshots of The Sikh Times (National Daily), Muslim Mirror, New Age Islam, and Pakistan Christian Post. Each clipping features a headline or article snippet about Allama Mashriqi's prediction of the breakup of Pakistan in 1956.

How did Mashriqi know that a Pakistan divided into two wings would not last? Even prior to independence in 1947, Mashriqi had recognized - and conveyed to Quaid-e-Azam

Mohammad Ali Jinnah (Founder of Pakistan) - that the division of India would be detrimental and that accepting a Pakistan with two completely disconnected parts would make it inherently difficult to maintain unity. And following independence, the Pakistani Government leadership (including Jinnah and his lieutenants) exacerbated this problem through a series of damaging decisions that further alienated the Bengalis in East Pakistan. For example, Dhaka was not made the capital of the country, despite the fact that the Bengalis were greater in number. Key positions in the Government were also given to West Pakistanis. And the country's resources were diverted mainly

to developing West Pakistan. Perhaps the most egregious example was the denial of the Bengalis' demand to recognize Bengali as a national language. On March 21, 1948, while in Dhaka, Jinnah said, "...let me make it very clear to you that the State language of Pakistan is going to be Urdu and no other language..." This declaration led to large protests in East Pakistan, but the Government leadership did not acquiesce to the Bengalis' demand.

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Crimes by policemen

Sometime ago, when Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal made a comment that "policemen are criminals in uniform", there was outrage in the Delhi Police. A few days later, Kejriwal had to withdraw his statement due to similar reactions. Recent incidents in Bengal involving policemen, both serving and retired, in criminal activities makes one feel that may be such crimes are not entirely unfamiliar in the last few weeks alone. Bengaluru police have been retelling their stories of police cadre (TSPF) and commandos involved in charges of robbing businesses post demonetization drive. Few years ago, some police officers in Myanmar allegedly started a big gang to rob banks. In Kolkata, a passenger and his all-age son of cash he was carrying. On his complaint, an investigation was conducted and several police officers were sent to jail for these crimes. Earlier in the year, a man was allegedly killed by police personnel used against police personnel used to centre around their corrupt activities or custodial violence. We had even heard of cases where stolen property recovered from the accused were misappropriated by unscrupulous police officers. However, policemen themselves planning and plotting robbery and thievery were rare indeed. That is why the recent incidents in Bengal frequently indicates that something is seriously wrong. There is no easy answer to the question as to who policemen turn criminals. Lure of quick and easy money, constant interaction with criminals and inferior nature of the police force are some of the main reasons. But the bigger question is how do such people come into the police force in the first place? Is there no system to screen such people from entering the system? Police recruitment does not have a system of identifying potential wrong doers. Usually physical efficiency tests and written exams are held to select candidates and field selection. Police departments of few states are now incorporating psychological assessment of a person's cognitive ability into the written test. But potential misfits are not flagged and removed based on their answers. In personal interview of police sub-inspectors in Karnataka, a psychologist is part of the

process (The Pakistan Times, April 21, 1948). All of these actions by the leadership led to an increasing rift within the country. Take it from me that in 1970, a worried and frustrated Mashriqi made a historic address, known as Khitab-i-Lahore (Lahore Speech), critiquing the Government and pointing at the grave issues facing the nation. "The nation should be plainly told that the situation will be in danger... I consider it of utmost importance that a large population of the Punjabis and Pathans should be transferred to East Pakistan without delay and a large number of Bengalis should be shifted to the Punjab and the NWFP [now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa]... Eastern and Western wings of the country will thus become equally strong." Liaquat Ali Khan did not appreciate Mashriqi's advice and instead resented his efforts. Mashriqi, along with his two sons, were arrested, his Khaksar Movement offices were sealed, and Al-Jamiat-e-Ulema-e-Islam (Al-Jamiat) was disbanded. Many followers were arrested, and copies of Khitab-i-Lahore were confiscated. In response to these actions, Husein Shaheed Suhrawardy, leader of the Awami League from Bengal criticized Mashriqi and filed a habeas corpus petition in the Lahore High Court. Along with Suhrawardy, the case was raised by Prime Minister Ali Bhutto and Justice Law Minister and Barrister Khawaja Asif Ali Zardari. Unfortunately, Chief Justice Mian Bashirullah Khan issued a writ of habeas corpus in favour of the detainees, demanding their release. The Lahore High Court rejected the habeas corpus without any solid grounds. With steps such as these, democracy was crushed in the initial years of Pakistan's founding. Mashriqi remained in jail for 18 months. Meanwhile, the Government of Pakistan took a strong stand against the demands of the Awami League. The autocratic style of rule led to a collapse of Jonathal Muslim League in the first provincial elections, which were held in 1954 in East Pakistan. Mashriqi opposed the results of the elections. He believed that the results were manipulated to give the break-up of Pakistan to secure power for the secessionists. Once again, the grievances of the Bengalis were ignored by the leadership. With these types of political anomalies, relations between East and West Pakistan deteriorated. In 1969, a dire situation in East Pakistan led to a massive migration of Bengalis to India. In a historic speech addressing a large gathering in Minar-e-Pakistan (Minar Park, Lahore) in 1966, Mashriqi issued a wake-up call to his peers in power as well as the nation: "We Mashriqi today from this platform I sound you a warning. Listen carefully and wonder. Some day you will have to face the same fate as we did. You will be stoned down all sides. The internal situation would have deteriorated greatly. A pulse of widespread bloodshed will sweep the nation. The forces of racial and provincial antipathy will strip the whole

country. Zimbabwes living here and exiled [sic] will return to their own. Thus will be inflicted to dismember the country. Take it from me that in 1970, Pakistan will be split with a grave threat to its sovereignty. You might think that I am exaggerating. But I assure you that the hands of courageous and unyielding leadership... On the governance of the country will fall in the hands of spineless self-sellers or sell-out opportunists... I was a young man [in 1970]. I warn you to prepare from now to face the situation which will emerge in that year." Following Liaquat Ali Khan's assassination on October 19, 1971, the situation in East Pakistan worsened. Major General Yahya Khan assumed power. Yahya Khan became Prime Minister from Bengal criticized Liaquat Ali Khan's government till he handed power to the Army Chief, General (later President) Muhammad Yahya Khan. Under Yahya Khan's Government, elections were held in East Pakistan. The Awami League (a political party formed in 1949) received a decisive victory in the National Assembly and Provincial Assembly. To prevent Muhammad Yahya Khan from gaining power, Yahya did all canons to a National Assembly session to elect a new Prime Minister. He instead tried to broker a power-sharing arrangement for himself with Zulfqar Ali Bhutto, whose Pakistan People's Party (PPP) received a massive victory in the elections. It seemed that both Yahya and Bhutto were willing to risk the breakup of Pakistan to secure power for themselves. Once again, the grievances of the Bengalis were ignored by the leadership. With these types of political anomalies, relations between East and West Pakistan deteriorated. In 1971, a dire situation in East Pakistan led to a massive migration of Bengalis to India. In a historic speech addressing the ground realities. Finally, under pressure from the East Wing's Armed Forces, Yahya finally arrived in Dhaka on March 25, 1971. During a high-level meeting in Dhaka, Air Commodore Zahir Masud, Commander of the Pakistan Air Force, informed Yahya Khan that the Awami League's move was actually opposed the use of force against the Bengalis and suggested a political settlement. For more information, read my book *Frontline: Air Commodore Zahir Masud: A Pioneer of the Pakistan Air Force*. Nevertheless, Yahya ordered military action.

were suppressed, while "Quaid-i-Azam's plea for one party in Pakistan" was emphasized (*The Pakistan Times*, April 21, 1948). All of these actions by the leadership led to an increasing rift within the country. On May 28, 1950, a worried and frustrated Mashriqi made a historic address, known as *Khitab-i-Lahore* (Lahore Speech), critiquing the Government and pointing out the grave issues facing the nation:

"The nation should be plainly told that Pakistan is in danger... I consider it of utmost importance that a large population of the Punjabis and Pathans should be transferred to East Pakistan without delay and a large number of Bengalis should be shifted to the Punjab and the NWFP [now Khyber Pakhtunkhwa]... Eastern and Western wings of the country will thus become equally strong..."

Liaquat Ali Khan did not appreciate Mashriqi's advice and instead resented his efforts. Mashriqi, along with his two sons, were arrested, his Khaksar Movement's (Tehrik) offices were sealed, *Al-Islah* newspaper was banned, many followers were arrested, and copies of *Khitab-i-Lahore* were

Following Jinnah's death, Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan continued with the precedent set by his predecessor. Mashriqi and other opposition leaders

confiscated. In response to these actions, Hussain Shaheed Suhrawardy (who later became Prime Minister) from Bengal criticized Mashriqi's arrest and filed a Habeas Corpus petition in the Lahore High Court. Along with Suhrawardy, the case was represented by Mian Mehmood Ali Kasuri (who later became Law Minister) and Barrister Khawaja Abdul Rahim. Unfortunately, Chief Justice Munir rejected their petition without any solid grounds. With steps such as these, democracy was crushed in the initial years of Pakistan's founding.

Mashriqi remained in jail for 18 months. Meanwhile, the Government of Pakistan took no meaningful action to address the Bengali grievances. The autocratic style of rule led to a collapse of Jinnah's Muslim League in the first provincial elections, which were held in 1954 in East Pakistan. Mashriqi sensed the disunity in the country. As a humanitarian and believer in the unity of people from all races and faiths, he was deeply concerned that the country would be torn apart. Therefore, in a historic speech addressing a large gathering in Minto Park (later Iqbal Park, Lahore) in 1956, Mashriqi issued a wake-up call to those in power as well as the nation:

"Ye Muslims! Today from this platform I sound you a warning. Listen carefully and ponder. Sometime in the future, probably in 1970, you will be confronted with a perilous situation. In 1970 - I see it clearly - the nation will be stormed from all sides. The internal situation would have deteriorated gravely. A panic of widespread bloodshed will sweep the nation. The frenzy of racial and provincial prejudices will grip the whole country. Zindabad [long live] and murdabad [death to] will deafen your ears. Plans will be initiated to dismember the country. Take it from me that in 1970, Pakistan will be plagued with a grave threat to its sovereignty. You might actually lose it if the reigns of the country were not in the hands of courageous and unrelenting leadership... Or, the governance of the country will fall in the hands of spineless self-seekers or self-centred opportunists... I warn you about 1970. I warn you to prepare from now to face the situation which will emerge in that year."

Following Liaquat Ali's assassination on October 16, 1951, subsequent governments maintained the status quo. The poor governance of the civil government paved the way for army rule and General (later President) Mohammad Ayub Khan took advantage of the situation to impose Martial Law. Despite taking some steps to redress Bengali resentment, Ayub Khan failed to win the Bengalis' hearts. East Pakistan's resentment against West Pakistan continued to grow. I saw the situation with my own eyes when I visited East Pakistan in 1969.

When Ayub Khan's government fell, he handed power to the Army Chief, General (later President) Mohammad Yahya Khan. Under Yahya's Government, elections were held and, in East Pakistan, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's party (Awami League) received a clear majority in the National Assembly and Provincial Assembly. To prevent Mujibur Rahman from gaining power, Yahya did not convene a National Assembly session to elect a new Prime Minister. He instead tried to broker a power-sharing arrangement for himself with Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto (whose Pakistan Peoples Party ended up in second position in the elections). It seemed that both Yahya and Bhutto were willing to risk the break-up of Pakistan to secure power for themselves. Once again, the grievances of the Bengalis were ignored by the leadership.

With these types of political maneuvers, relations between East and West Pakistan deteriorated gravely. Yahya didn't seem interested in visiting East Pakistan or understanding the ground

realities. Finally, under pressure from the East Wing's Armed Forces, Yahya finally arrived in Dhaka on March 15, 1971. During a high-level meeting in Dhaka, Air Commodore Zafar Masud, Commander of the Pakistan Air Force's East Wing (and also Allama Mashriqi's niece's son), adamantly opposed the use of force against the Bengalis and suggested a political settlement (for more information, read my book entitled *Air Commodore M. Zafar Masud: A Pioneer of the Pakistan Air Force*). Nevertheless, Yahya ordered military action. This led to the War of Bangladesh Independence. Ultimately, the Pakistan Army surrendered (90,000 soldiers and civilians became prisoners of war) and Bangladesh emerged as a sovereign country on December 16, 1971.

Had the Government listened to Mashriqi's concern for the Bengalis and treated East Pakistan fairly, the country would have remained intact and the West Pakistanis' humiliating surrender, along with the many human atrocities and suffering that accompanied the war, would not have occurred. A selfless and visionary leadership could have kept Pakistan united. The country still awaits this kind of leadership, even today.

Nasim Yousaf (grandson of Allama Mashriqi) has been conducting research on the history of the Indian sub-continent since 1996. These efforts have led him to some of the most prestigious research libraries in the US, U.K., and Canada. He has produced 15 books and 19 digitized files of rare works related to Mashriqi. He has also presented papers at American academic conferences and his articles have been published in peer-reviewed journals, namely Harvard Asia Quarterly, Pakistaniaat, World History Encyclopedia, and teaching journal Education About Asia.

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